THE RESPONDENT AS THE FOCUS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

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Istat | Directorate for Data Collection

User-Centered Questionnaire Design

The researcher should place the respondent at the center of the questionnaire design to ensure:

- Questionnaire usability
- Pleasant completion task
- Data quality

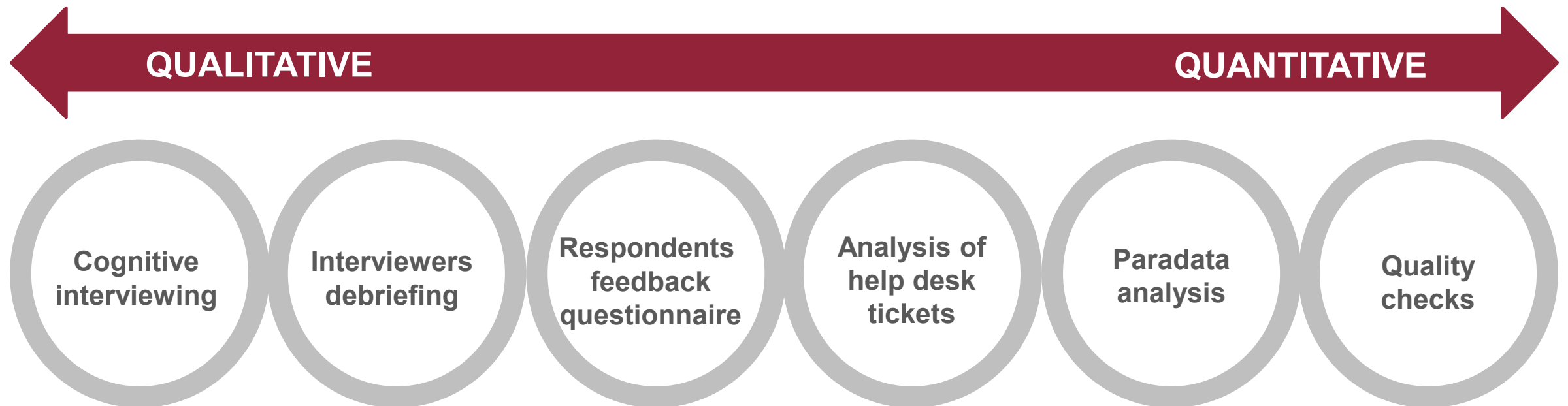" Each questionnaire is also unique, an original. A designer must cut and try, see how it looks and sounds, see how people react to it, and then cut again, and try again (Converse and Presser 1986) "

RESEARCHER

QUESTIONNAIRE

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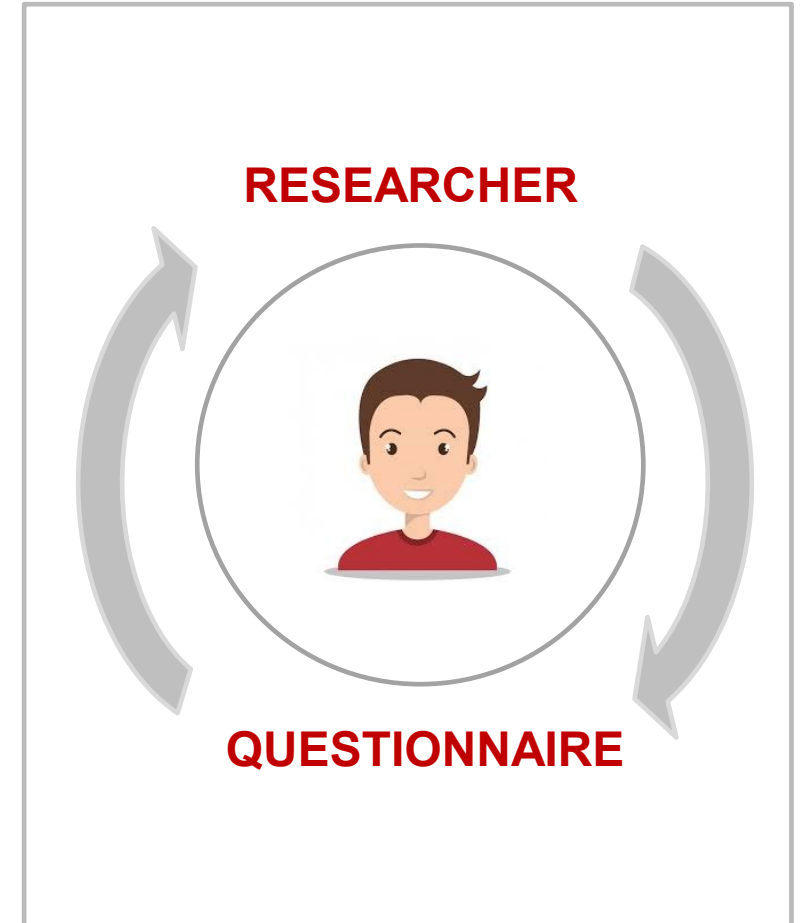
Placing the respondent at the center of the questionnaire design: a bunch of methods

How the respondent can be the focus of the questionnaire design?

QUALITATIVE ⟵⟶ **QUANTITATIVE**

Cognitive interviewing

Interviewers debriefing

Respondents feedback questionnaire

Analysis of help desk tickets

Paradata analysis

Quality checks

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Listening to respondents: the cognitive interview

A tool to understand how respondents answer survey questions, evaluate the quality of their responses and, as a result, improve the questionnaire design.

Targets
- Surveys on individuals and households
- Surveys on enterprises
- Surveys on institutions

Modes of conduction
- Face to face
- Web probing
- Online cognitive interview

Comprehension	Retrieval	Judgement	Response
Question intent Meaning of terms	Recallability of information Recall strategies	Motivation Sensitivity	Mapping the response

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Collecting feedback from interviewers

Interviewers have a unique and valuable knowledge of the main problems respondents encounter in the field. Collecting their feedback is useful to improve data collection tools and overcome critical issues.

Methods

- Debriefing questionnaires
- In person debriefing session
- Online debriefing session

Topics

- Difficulties in responding (sequence, wording, response categories, recallability, etc.)
- Usability of the CA questionnaires

Case studies

- **Labor Force Survey**
- **Household Budget Survey** (wording, classifications, sequence)
- **Population Census** (usability, layout, wording)

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Collecting feedback from respondents

A set of structured and standardized questions at the end of the questionnaire to collect information on problems that respondents may have had with either contents or navigation.

Aims

- To gather information on how the questionnaire was completed
- To identify which survey questions worked poorly
- To investigate data collection mode propensity
- To detect technical difficulties with CA questionnaire (login, browsing, etc.)

Contents

- Was the questionnaire completed by a proxy respondent?
- Did the respondent need help in filling in the questionnaire?
- Would they have been willing to be interviewed through a different mode?
- Which survey questions were difficult to answer?

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Identifying most frequent completion issues: help desk tickets analysis

Tickets are the users' requests for help registered by a customer service. This is key information to improve the questionnaire.
The Contact Center has been in operation since January 2016, managing about 60 surveys and processing on average 80,000 requests per year.

Methods

- Machine learning techniques
- Text mining
- Classification algorithms

Topics

- Functioning of the questionnaire
- Information on specific questions
- Additional instructions for completion

Case studies

- **Research and Development**
- **ICT Usage in Enterprises**
- **Business Census**

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To track navigation issues: paradata analysis

Paradata analysis is useful to detect questionnaire pain points: break-off points, too long or too short completion times, most frequent error prompts.

Aims
- To analyze response propensity
- To examine the frequency of hard and soft prompts
- To identify answer changes and satisficing behaviors
- To study the device and browser usage

Case studies
- **Research and Development**
- **ICT Usage in Enterprises**
- **Aspects of Daily Life**
- **Population Census**

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Facilitating the answering process: quality checks

Quality checks are not only a tool to enhance data quality, but also a resource for the development of supporting strategies to make the questionnaire completion an easy and stress-free experience.

Methods

- Consistency checks
- Reconciliation questions
- Reminders
- Summary screens

Aims

- To support the retrieval of quantitative information
- To prevent respondents from making mistakes and getting stuck
- To provide guidance on how and where to correct mistakes

Case studies

- **Agricultural Census**
- **Research and Development**

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Case Study: The Agricultural Census

According to the data reported, the total arable land is **100,50** hectares. Do you confirm it?

Yes

No

Used as a reminder in the following questions to support memory and prevent respondents from making mistakes

«Please, check data and correct mistakes before going on»

Summary screens

The total arable land is **100,50** hectares.

Please, divide it according to the following types of tenure.

Ownership
Rental
Free use

The sum of reported surfaces is YY hectares. An area of YY hectares was previously declared.

Please, check the correct information.

XX ☐
YY ☐

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Conclusions

As questionnaire designers it is our responsibility to detect problems and look for solutions.

This process is often hindered by a number of obstacles:

Comparability

Regulations

Software limitations

Resistance to change

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Thanks for listening!

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